

# **FALLS LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA PARK PROFILE**

## **PURPOSE STATEMENT**

Falls Lake was authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1965 for purposes including flood control, water supply, recreation, fish and wildlife enhancement, and stream flow regulation for water quality control. The Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965 requires the state or other lower government entity to pay 50 percent of the separable costs of the project allocated to recreation, pay 50 percent of the recreation development costs, and assume all costs of operation, maintenance, and replacement of the recreation facilities. Falls Lake is the only North Carolina project cost-shared in this manner.

The N.C. General Assembly authorized the Department to administer project land and water for recreational purposes and to operate, maintain, and replace facilities provided for such purposes. One year later, the state entered into a cost-sharing agreement with the U.S. Army for the construction of separable recreation facilities and the acquisition of separable recreation land. A master plan was contracted to a private design firm by the U.S. Army. The state of North Carolina and the U.S. Army reviewed and amended plan submittals until a mutually acceptable master plan was completed in 1981. Specific site design and construction projects were then contracted by the Army.

On September 23, 1983, Governor James B. Hunt signed a 50-year lease with the Army to use approximately 38,680 acres of land and water in the Falls Lake Project Area for public park, recreation, fish, wildlife, and other natural resource management purposes.

Falls Lake is an important statewide recreational resource. The eight major sites comprising the Falls Lake State Recreation Area provide public access to the lake for recreation and a variety of recreational activities compatible with park land resources, including day-use activities such as hiking, trail use, swimming, boating, picnicking, and natural and cultural resource interpretation. Overnight recreational opportunities are also offered at family tent and trailer campgrounds and group campgrounds.

Falls Lake State Recreation Area affords outstanding scenic vistas of the open water and shoreline of the lake. Unlike many earlier Corps of Engineer projects, the shoreline of Falls Lake is totally protected by public ownership. The undulating topography of the forested shoreline land is punctuated by scenic stream openings, bluffs, beaches, and rock outcrops. This same diverse topography has created a lake with varied scenic qualities such as open water, narrow curving channels, coves, and long finger-like inlets. Falls Lake provides a large open space sanctuary in stark contrast with surrounding urbanization.

The length and breadth of this project has protected exceptional wildlife habitats in aquatic and terrestrial environments. The 240-mile shoreline protects pockets of specific habitats while providing major wildlife corridors connecting upstream and downstream river basins as well as linkages with other dedicated public greenways. The 38,800 acre lake itself is a major oasis for wintering water birds and a stopover place for numerous migrating species. It is a nesting place for our national symbol, the American Bald Eagle, and a myriad of songbirds, shore birds, and raptors. Overall, this major resource provides excellent opportunities for the interpretation of our biological resources. Of the 12 sites included in the Registry of Natural Heritage Areas, one is located on land administered by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources: the 44-acre B.W. Wells Interpretive Area, registered for its representative forest communities, geomorphic landform, and education and nature study.

Several archaeological, historic, or culturally significant sites are on land managed by the Department. Native American Indian sites have been identified on the Rolling View and Sandling Beach areas. The extant historic homes of B.W. Wells and General Mangum occupy sites administered by the Division of Parks and Recreation. Numerous representative period structures as well as cemeteries are scattered across Department land.

Falls Lake lies within two geologic provinces—the Raleigh belt east of NC 50 and the Durham Triassic basin to the west. These two provinces are divided by the Jonesboro Fault, a break in the earth's crust where the rocks to the west dropped down. The more recent rocks of the Durham Triassic basin are sedimentary, formed 220 million years ago as rivers washed clay, sand, and rock fragments into narrow troughs or basins. Examples of sedimentary rocks found in the northwest section of the project area are sandstones, mudstones, and conglomerates. Rocks within the Raleigh belt are much older rocks, either igneous or metamorphic in origin. Common metamorphic rocks include both gneiss and schist. Igneous examples are diorite, gabbro, and ultramafic (iron-rich) rocks such as soapstone. In the past, soapstone was quarried and used as a building stone and cemetery headstone. Many rock outcrops of the Raleigh belt occur along the narrowly dissected eastern portion of the lake.

Falls Lake State Recreation Area exists as a unit of the N.C. state parks system primarily because of its important recreational and scenic values and secondly for its biological significance. Other significant values include archaeologic and geologic resources. The Division of Parks and Recreation is charged with preserving these and other values and providing park experiences that promote pride in and understanding of North Carolina's natural heritage.

## **PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES**

**Water-Based Recreation and Safety:** Falls Lake affords many recreational opportunities such as fishing, sailing, boating, water-skiing, and swimming. Educational programs in this theme area stress water safety and stewardship. While providing these recreational opportunities to an expanding urban population, we must also maintain the quality of the resource. Balancing quality of life with quality of the environment is a central theme in environmental education.

**Fish and Wildlife Habitats:** The construction of the Falls Lake dam changed the aquatic habitats in the Neuse River. A comparison of the macroinvertebrates and fish species in the Eno River with those in Falls Lake shows how a dramatic change in habitat can affect animal populations. Today, continuous stocking programs in Falls Lake ensure an adequate population of largemouth bass, bluegill, catfish, striped bass, and crappie. Artificial reefs and underwater fish shelters have been constructed to support both game and non-game fish in the lake. Terrestrial habitat improvements include brush piles for wildlife shelters, tree thinning for bald eagle management, nest boxes for wood ducks and bluebirds, and food plots with native plants. Wildlife Resources Commission activities by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Wildlife Resources Commission will be tied to a "watchable wildlife" program throughout the project area. The Environmental Education Learning Experience (EELE) for Falls Lake also focuses on wildlife habitats, biological communities, and human impacts on these communities.

**History of the Falls Lake Project:** Prior to 1978, flooding of the Neuse River caused extensive damage to public and private properties including roadways, railroads, industrial sites, and farm lands. The Falls Lake Project was developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to control damaging floods and supply a source of water for surrounding communities. Construction of the dam began in 1978 and was completed in 1981. In addition to providing flood control and a dependable water supply, Falls Lake offers many recreational opportunities to nearby city-dwellers in Raleigh and Durham.

## STATISTICS

Visitation (1998)	959,610
Operating Budget (FY 98-99)	\$1,568,301
Revenue (FY 98-99)	\$430,551

## VISITOR FACILITIES (7 Recreation Areas)

Tent & trailer camping (176 sites with hookups, 99 without hookups, showers, dumpstations)	Improved group camping (18 sites) Primitive camping (89 sites)
Picnic areas (4) and shelters (22)	Drinking water
6 Swimming areas, 3 bathhouses (3 areas for campers only)	Concession area
12 Hiking trails (12 miles total)	Fishing
Boat access (10 launch ramps)	Privately operated marina

## CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION NEEDS

1	The <b>telephone/utility improvements</b> project will construct 11 lift stations at Rolling View and replace beach telephones at Holly Point (2), Sandling Beach, and Beaverdam.	\$ 435,260
2	The <b>playground replacements</b> project will demolish 6 existing playgrounds and replace them with ADA and safety compliant accessible facilities.	467,742
3	The <b>Beaverdam community building</b> project will construct 2 buildings similar to that at Rolling View.	1,331,659
4	The <b>Rolling View residence replacement</b> project will replace an old residence that has serious structural, electrical, and space problems.	207,267
5	The <b>Sandling Beach dock replacement</b> project will provide a new floating dock with hinged gangplank to replace a dock that was unable to withstand the fetch and waves at this location. Project will also construct a fixed fishing pier with handicapped accessibility and add a small, two boat connecting dock.	165,349
6	The <b>B.W. Wells Historical Area, Phase I</b> project will stabilize the house and grounds until further study can determine the ultimate use of the site. Project includes site clean up work, trail renovations, and repairs of the house, office, and out buildings to protect them from further deterioration. A DPR team will be assigned to oversee a historic site needs study.	724,061
7	The <b>sand seawall</b> project will reduce the sand movement along the shoreline at the Rolling View community building launch and eliminate the need for continual sand removal from those ramps.	68,212
8	The <b>barracks at maintenance area</b> project includes a 300 ft. access road, 24 bed barracks, utility system expansion, and 36 parking spaces.	754,066
9	The <b>Beaverdam Trail System</b> project will construct a 16-mile trail network to provide needed pedestrian connections between day-use facilities, hiking and interpretive trails for day-users, a major trail section for mountain bikers, and miles of dual-use trails. Six bridges 100 ft. long will be included.	553,884
10	The <b>warehouse at five sites</b> project will construct five 500 sq. ft., secure mini-warehouses with access roads, gravel service yards, chainlink fencing, water and electric lines, and 5 flammable materials storage cabinets.	212,811

11	The <b>administrative building addition</b> project will accommodate additional house staff and replace office functions lost to staff expansion. Project consists of constructing 2000 sq. ft. of office space, renovating the attic, constructing a 1000 sq. ft. auditorium, 24 additional parking spaces and 2 bus parking spaces. Also includes 700 sq. ft. of exhibits at the building entrance.	946,918
12	The <b>cabins at Rolling View</b> project will construct 3 clusters of 4 full-service cabins, a dock at each cluster, a 3000 ft. access road, and a pump station.	2,629,100
13	The <b>Sycamore Point Horse Trail development</b> project will provide a trailhead, interpretive signage, and trail construction for the horse community. It will include 4500 ft. of road, two 80' bridges, 13 miles of trail, mulching toilet, well, pumphouse, and parking.	1,064,176
14	The <b>Holly Point shelter</b> project will provide a place for interpretive programs in all weather conditions and group gatherings/meetings. Project includes a semi-enclosed picnic shelter with lockable storage for a portable stage. Facility will be electrified.	163,578
15	The <b>B.W. Wells pier and trail</b> project will provide a trail to the homesteads, a fixed fishing pier, a picnic shelter, modification of the low pressure pipe access heads to provide a safe play field, and clearing and seeding.	341,452
16	The <b>ranger residences</b> project will provide on-site security and safety presence in the overnight use areas to begin compliance with the Division's safety guidelines. Project will construct 7 new residences one each at B.W. Wells, Holly Point, Rolling View, Beaverdam, Shinleaf, and 2 at the maintenance complex.	1,423,567
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>\$11,489,102</b>

## REGISTERED NATURAL HERITAGE AREAS

**B. W. Wells Interpretive Area:** Of the 12 Registered Natural Heritage Areas around Falls Lake, this is the only one managed by the Division of Parks and Recreation. This site is a former farmstead covering 44 acres on the lake's north shore; it was the home of Dr. B.W. Wells, a locally renowned botanist and ecologist.

Most of the site's high quality natural communities were inundated when the lake was created, and much of the remaining area supports small examples of various successional Piedmont natural communities on lands that were previously cleared and terraced for agriculture. The site now includes camping and boating facilities and is also used for interpretive and educational programs. The most notable natural feature is Ziegler's Rock, a large cliff composed of quartz and biotite gneiss. The outcrop formerly towered 55 feet above a meander of the Neuse River; now mostly inundated, only about 15 feet remain above the waterline.

## FUTURE LAND ACQUISITION NEEDS

The U. S. Government owns all of the public land surrounding Falls Lake. The State of North Carolina leases lands for wildlife management and outdoor recreation purposes. The North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation currently manages 5,034 acres.

### 1999 STAFF POSITIONS

Permanent		Seasonal		Peak Load	
Park Superintendent IV	1	Park Attendant	15	Assistant Park Ranger	1
Park Superintendent I	2	Assistant Park Ranger	12	Park Attendant	12
Park Ranger III	6	General Utility Worker	17	Sales Clerk I (Fee Collector)	8
Park Ranger II	7	Office Assistant II	1		
Park Ranger I	1				
Facility Maintenance Supervisor II	1				
Maintenance Mechanic IV	4				
Maintenance Mechanic II	1				
Maintenance Mechanic I	4				
Trades Worker II	1				
Mechanic II	1				
Water/Wastewater Treatment Area Operator	1				
Grounds Worker	2				
General Utility Worker	1				
Office Assistant IV	1				

### PROPOSED STAFF ADDITIONS

Permanent		Seasonal		Peak Load	
Park Ranger I	1	Assistant Park Ranger	2		
General Utility Worker	1				
Office Assistant III	1				
Office Assistant II	1				